

Wake Transit Plan – Bus Plan: Service Guidelines and Performance Measures

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Item Summary

To ensure long-term sustainability of the evolving transit network, it requires that services are cost-effective and that financial operations are sound. With these goals in mind, the member agencies commissioned development of service design guidelines and performance measures for bus service. These service guidelines and performance measures will establish a framework and rationale for the operation of transit services in Wake County.

Service Guidelines provide consistency in the service planning process. **Performance Measures** track and report on the productivity of individual services and the overall network. The combined framework is intended to communicate a clear, consistent, and equitable strategy that is understandable to the Wake Transit Bus Plan's stakeholders: transit riders, transit operators, elected officials and taxpayers.

Wake County's transit providers – GoRaleigh, GoTriangle, GoCary and Wake Coordinated Transportation Services (WCTS) – adhere to service guidelines and performance measures set locally. These locally developed guidelines and measures both shape and communicate development and monitor the performance of transit service funded through local resources. The service guidelines and performance measures recommended as part of the Wake Transit Bus Plan consider – but do not entirely replicate – existing local measures and standards. Instead, the Wake Transit Bus Plan guidelines and measures are intended to supplement local policies and be utilized in parallel with any local measures and standards. The recommended guidelines and measures also reflect best practices developed by transit agencies across the United States.

Transit Service Guidelines and Performance Measure Goals

Reflect the vision and goals of the overall network

Ensure consistency among Wake County transit service providers

Provide transparency

Establish evaluation criteria for all services

Prioritize funding

Support Federal Transit Administration (FTA) compliance

As communities and agencies design and deploy transit services, it is important to match the optimal service types to the individual market so that transit services are efficient, appropriate and cost effective. The service allocation policy, as a part of this document, defines two different levels of service – productivity and coverage. The goal for the Wake Transit Plan is to implement 70% of all new services at the productivity level, and the remaining 30% at the coverage. The productivity model concentrates service on collector streets that feature the

highest density of development. The coverage model operates service on many streets, even if service is infrequent – ensuring that the maximum number of people have nearby access to bus service.

Route Classifications are necessary to facilitate evaluation of routes within the context of similar routes. It also facilitates investment and development of individual routes, by allowing individual routes to move up and down the classification hierarchy. Eight unique service types are identified in the Wake Transit Bus Plan: frequent routes; local routes; community routes; demand-response services; core regional routes; express routes, and shuttle services. Each service type is linked with service level guidelines and productivity measures.

Service Design Standards have been developed to guide the planning and implementation of new routes. Service should be simple; routes should operate along a direct path; route deviations should be minimized; major routes should operate along arterials; routes should be symmetrical; routes should serve well-defined markets; services should be well-coordinated; service should be consistent; service design should maximize service, and vehicle type should be appropriate for service.

Service Level Standards help transit providers determine how much transit service to actually provide, given the underlying local market and operating conditions. Setting expectations for service levels also creates a coordinated and consistent network of service by establishing uniform standards for each service type. The service level standards are determined based on five standards:

1. Service Coverage/Availability
2. Span of Service
3. Service Frequencies
4. Passenger Loads
5. Bus Stop Spacing and Amenities

Performance Measures consist of a limited set of focused measures that capture the critical aspects of service productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness; at the same time, these performance measures can be easily reproduced and communicated. The following four route-level-performance measures are recommended:

1. Operating Cost per Passenger Boarding
2. Passenger Boardings per Revenue Hour
3. Farebox Recovery
4. On-Time Performance

The TPAC designed these performance standards and measures to strike a balance between setting realistic and achievable goals with a desire to encourage ongoing improvement. As such, the TPAC recommends that transit providers **compare and contrast route performance** relative to the Wake Transit Bus Plan standards. Routes that consistently over-perform to their standards may warrant additional investment; and conversely routes that consistently under-perform relative to their standard may warrant a reduced investment.